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Georgia Southern Theatre production about 1998 hate crime to stream April 8

April 8, 2021

The Masquers on the Georgia Southern University Armstrong Campus will stream a production of “The Laramie Project” from April 8 through 11.



Logan Western

The play addresses the tragic 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard, a 21-year-old gay man and student who was abducted, brutally beaten and left tied to a fence to die in the countryside of Laramie, Wyoming.

“This play was difficult to handle in some scenes,” said theater major Logan Western, who has eight roles in the show. “When a character spouts some homophobic nonsense, my guts kind of twist in anger. I cringe at what they say, especially knowing that these are the real words of real people. In order to handle these feelings, I would think about how far we’ve come since the incidents of the play.”

The play was written by Moisés Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theater Project after they conducted more than 200 interviews with those who were either connected to the case or citizens of the town where the assault took place.

“It is horrifying to know that hate crimes like the one committed against Matthew Shepard in 1998 still occur,” Pamela Sears, professor and director, said. “I hope viewers take comfort in hearing the genuine reflection and changes some of Laramie’s citizens made in the crime’s aftermath.”

Western plays a variety of characters in the show, including two Catholic priests, the person who finds the body and the murderer. He said preparing for eight different roles was challenging but rewarding.

“In preparation for all of these, I found it really important to differentiate all of them, because the audience may see my face and mix up my characters,” Western said. “In order to do that, I created a different voice for each one with a certain adjective in mind. For the character of Jedidiah, I used my normal voice and my adjective was ‘questioning’ as he changes his views on homosexuality throughout the play. I wanted the audience to be able to see my face but hear which character I was.”

The production was recorded live and will be available to stream due to COVID-19 protocols.

“Our student cast and production team has been incredibly dedicated to this project. I’m truly grateful to be able to work with them,” Sears said. “Though we all look forward to resuming live productions next fall, this process has been creatively fulfilling and educational.”

“The Laramie Project” will be available to stream starting April 8 for free at georgiasouthern.edu/theatrelivestream.

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